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Appendix to the Vice-Chancellor's decision of 30 January 2012

Guidelines concerning victimisation at SLU

Introduction

The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) does not tolerate victimisation. All employees and students at SLU are to be treated equally and respectfully. Our approach should be characterised by tolerance of our differences and differing opinions. Everyone is responsible for working to counteract victimisation.

The aim of this document is:

- to provide about victimisation;
- to show how we can prevent this type of behaviour from occurring;
- to provide managers and employees with support in situations where someone feels that they been victimised.

Definitions

'Victimisation' refers to recurrent, unjust or negative actions that are directed toward individual employees in a victimising manner and that can lead to them feeling isolated from their fellow workers¹ (e.g., by making someone's work more difficult, ridicule or slander them).

¹ Statute book of the Swedish Work Environment Authority, AFS 1993:17

For the sake of clarity, it should be mentioned that occasional differences of opinion, conflicts and cooperative problems should normally be viewed as common occurrences. These can be resolved through discussions and respect for the other's right to hold an opinion. However, in a poor, closed working environment, insulting statements and actions can get out of hand and lead to some form of harassment occurring.

It is always the subjective experience of the victim that determines what is and what is not insulting.

Causes

Anyone can be affected by victimisation at work and the victimisation can be both active and passive in nature. However, the risk of victimisation can increase due to various types of shortcomings in the working environment and its organisation. Examples include ambiguities regarding objectives, the division of work, authorisations and room to act, a lack of communication and information or poor leadership.

Discovering victimisation

A person who is being victimised or harassed may show signs of irritation, aversion, be passive, have low tolerance to stress, demonstrate pronounced tiredness, have headaches and experience discomfort at work. If you look at a whole group, the warning signs might be, for example, a high absentee rate, reduced efficiency, high staff turnover, cooperative problems or someone being isolated from their fellow workers.

Preventative measures

SLU is striving to create a work climate where victimisation does not occur. Systematic work environment management is an important element of this work. By employing this, it is possible to identify at an early stage signs of anxiety, the onset of dissatisfaction and conflicts which, in the long term, could lead to harassment and other offensive behaviour. The most important tools in this context are:

- employee discussions;
- workplace meetings;
- nice introductions of new and relocated staff;
- psychosocial safety inspections;
- initiatives to increase awareness of victimisation;
- rapid reactions to insulting and inappropriate behaviour.

Your responsibility as a manager if someone is victimised

As a manager, you are responsible for the work environment and you must act if you are made aware that an employee or student is being subjected to victimisation or harassment.

- Take actions so that the problem ceases immediately; for advice, please refer to the Swedish Work Environment Authority regulation AFS 1993:17.
- Contact the parties involved and conduct private discussions with both of them, in order to get an overview of the events.
- Make sure they receive any support they may need.
- If necessary, contact a human resources specialist for advice and support.

- If the problem concerns the relationship between an employee and their manager, the problem should be flagged at a higher level, so that a more senior manager addresses the problem.
- When the case is closed, a follow-up should be conducted according to work environment procedures.

As a manager, you can get advice, support and guidance in these issues from SLU's human resources specialists, lawyers and occupational health staff.

Advice to victims

- Talk about the problem and look for support from your colleagues.
- Document what has happened, and when, where and how.
- Contact your line manager and request a private conversation.
- Accept offers for help processing the events.
- Get help from your trade union organisation or health and safety representative.

If you have been subjected to victimisation or harassment you can, in addition to your line manager, approach SLU's human resources specialists, lawyers and occupational health staff. You can also approach your trade union organisation or health and safety representative. If you are a doctoral student, you can also approach the PhD student ombudsman.

Acts and ordinances

UN Declaration of human rights

Work Environment Act SFS 1977:1160

The Swedish Work Environment Authority regulation AFS 1993:17

Discrimination Act SFS 2008:567

Higher Education Act SFS 1992:1434

Higher Education Ordinance SFS 1993:100

Ordinance for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences 1993:221

Swedish Penal Code 1962:700